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Approved For Release 2005/03/16 : CIA-RDP80B01554R003300300062-9

Executive Registry

78-9641/11

26 DEC 1978

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2 JAN 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : John N. McMahon  
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : Employment of Women at Grades  
GS-11 and Above

REFERENCE : Your memorandum, same Subject, dated  
15 December 1978 (ER 78-9641/10)

1. I am in complete agreement with your stated objective of increasing the representation of women in the higher grades. In my first instruction in April 1978 to the newly-appointed Chief of the Personnel Management Group, I expressed my conviction that we are not doing enough to move our female professionals up through the ranks, particularly in the operational area.

2. Subsequently, we have undertaken a detailed examination of the role of women officers, and specifically operations officers, in the Directorate. We found that, although there has been improvement in recent years in the sense that the number of women officers has increased at all levels from GS-12 through GS-18, the women remained under-represented in senior positions, far short of the 15.8% which represented the women's share of professional positions when our last survey was made in April 1978. There were, however, undeniable signs of progress. In CY 1977, among those promoted to GS-13, women had for the first time a lower time-in-grade average -- 4.5 years vs. 5.2 years for the men, and the average age

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of both groups was 40. Among those promoted to GS-14, the average time-in-grade difference was reduced to five months, as against nine months in 1971; and the average age of the women dropped from 48.3 to 46, whereas for men it rose from 41.4 to 43.

3. Given the operational successes of women in the earlier days of the Organization and their currently demonstrated effectiveness in recruitment, case work and managerial positions, it is evident that women can qualify for promotion to the senior levels in the "D" Career Service. The key to upward mobility is the opportunity for qualifying operational service in the field sufficiently early in the career to ensure competitiveness subsequently. Indeed, the record shows clearly that failure to receive operational assignments, whether women or men, will inevitably result in the absence of the kind of achievements which the evaluation panels are looking for. It is not a case of the evaluation panels having bias against women, but that the women's files by and large did not reflect the variety of experiences and proven operational qualifications on which the panels base their ratings.

4. During the past year we have made determined efforts to increase the number of women operations officers abroad. These efforts have been successful. We will have more women in operations and in higher positions overseas than ever before. For example, the assignment of women operations officers in East Asia will be increased by 33%, [redacted] in Latin America, [redacted] (57%); and in Europe, [redacted] 61.1% increase. Also, we will have [redacted] women as deputy chiefs of station next year, as against [redacted] this year. In due course, a number of the women now assigned to operational duties abroad should be contenders for supergrade positions.

5. The current trend, favorable to women, can be maintained only if we continue to receive a regular intake of qualified women professionals and if the currently serving women operations officers can manage to harmonize their career goals with their personal and family plans. Experience shows that this can become a critical problem beyond the GS-12/13 level.


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6. As you have stated, the requirements of our professional disciplines would preclude any extensive number of lateral entries, but we would be pleased to consider qualified candidates with appropriate linguistic, foreign area or managerial experience. Realistically, however, the type of woman who could aspire to senior positions in CIA will have, by the time she is in her 30s, well-developed career interests. It is difficult to see what incentives we might be able to offer to attract her away from academia, business or other branches of government.

7. We do not see outside recruitment as a viable option toward any significant increase of women employees in senior and middle level positions in the Operations Directorate. Furthermore, unless the qualifications of the lateral entrants were unusually impressive, their appointments would tend to demoralize the career ranks who would perceive their own career opportunities blocked by outsiders. The subsequent ranking of such "outsiders" by the evaluation panels would create further problems, because the chances are strong that the panels would not be impressed with the relevance of the outside experience in the competition for advancement in the CIA hierarchy. Thus, lateral entrants may find themselves languishing in grade for a long time with Management powerless to advance them without doing grave injury to the integrity and credibility of the panel system.

8. In sum, we do not see any rapid solution to the problem of increasing substantially the representation of women in senior ranks. On the other hand, if we can ensure an adequate number of entries of women at the junior professional grades and then move the young women into qualifying positions of increasing responsibility while we "manage" the careers of those already on board toward logical professional progression as we are currently doing, then the problem will largely solve itself with the passage of years.

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John N. McMahon